



1997 Session Report *for the 47th District*



Representative Suzette Cooke

Committees:
Children and Family Services - chair
Appropriations

Representative Jack Cairnes

Committees:
Government Reform and Land Use - vice chair
Criminal Justice and Corrections
Transportation Policy and Budget

Dear friends,

What a fantastic legislative session we just finished! We made incredible strides for the people of Washington state. Not only did we finish the session on time — the first time in 40 years we didn't need a special session in a budget-writing year — but the 105-day session produced landmark progress. The smallest budget increase in 25 years. Historic welfare reform. A boost for education. A tough new juvenile justice law to intervene earlier and with stiffer consequences for young offenders. This and much more. Wow! Please read about some of our progress in this newsletter.

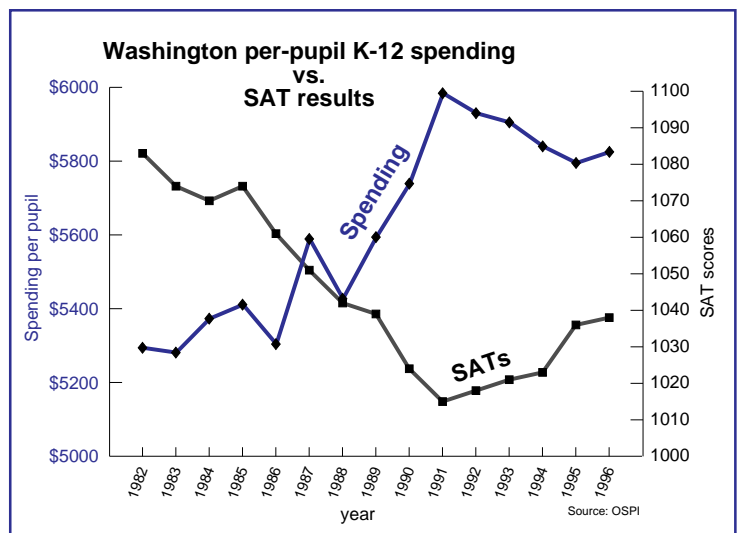
Our conservative Republican agenda is continuing to lead Washington to more prosperity, stronger families, safer streets, and less costly, more accountable government. With your continued support, we will maintain the course. There is much more to accomplish.

During the interim, we will maintain our offices in Olympia. We would like to continue hearing from you. Your ideas and thoughts are important to us. Your calls and letters help us represent you. And we'd like to help you if you have problems with state government. Be sure to call or write us if you're not sure that you can believe what you're hearing about an issue. We'll give you the facts. You can use the ActionGram on the back if you like.

Suzette Cooke Jack Cairnes

Education

Education was the highest priority issue in the budget and the hearts of Republican legislators this year. No other issue has so much impact on our state's future and our quality of life than the success of today's children. Their success depends on a strong education, yet as the state's financial commitment to education has increased in the past decade or so, students' academic performance has fallen.



This year, our **A-D-Cs** of Education legislative package set higher academic standards for students and will provide schools the freedom and resources they need to help students achieve those standards. We passed 25 bills to improve **A**cademics, **D**iscipline, and **C**ommunity Involvement and **C**hoice in schools. Our second grade reading bill, for example, will require public schools for the first time to test second graders' reading skills and give them extra help if needed to ensure they get a strong start on their education.



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Several Discipline bills will ensure students and teachers can focus on academics in the classroom without discipline distractions. One bill, for example, would strengthen schools' authority to deal with gang activities, intruders, drug and alcohol use, expulsions, dress codes and other discipline issues.

Community involvement and choice bills we passed include one that would strengthen parents' rights to know what is being taught to their students. Another would give school districts choices in hiring people with baccalaureate degrees and relevant experience to teach with alternate certifications.

supported the November referendum (vote of the people) to allow districts to seek four-year levies to improve their long-term budget planning.

In higher education, our budget allows 6,390 additional students to enroll in public colleges. We increased funding for financial aid grants, the state's work study program and other aid programs by \$34 million over the next two years. We also passed a law allowing families to pre-purchase college tuition years before their students are ready for college, thus locking in tuition costs.



Suzette negotiates some welfare reform issues with the governor.

Besides these policy changes, we enacted a strong education budget that increases per pupil spending by \$168 over the biennium. Total K-12 spending will be \$8.9 billion. We continued funding for current school operations plus added \$323 million in enhancements, including \$196 million in education employee salary increases and \$126 million in program enhancements, such as computer and textbook purchases and discretionary funds for teachers.

Jack and Suzette voted to allow local levies to fund up to 24 percent of school district operational costs and

Welfare Reform

Suzette worked for five years to reform Washington's welfare system, and her diligence paid off this year. The historic new welfare reform law eliminates the entitlement status of welfare. Welfare recipients are now required to work or seek work in exchange for state benefits. Welfare recipients can collect benefits for no more than five years under the new law. There was no limit in the previous system, and work requirements were marginal.

Families in need will now find a renewed sense of responsibility and hope as the welfare system shifts from being a dependency-producing handout to a responsibility-inducing system providing job opportunities.

Those who can't find work under the new welfare law will receive a needs assessment. Depending on the results, they will receive job training, child care, medical assistance, food, and connections to the community in addition to their cash grants. They also will have opportunities to save money, receive a diversion grant, or take advantage of other incentives to help them become self-sufficient.

Under the new law, child support collections will increase, requiring fewer parents to apply for state welfare assistance. Non-custodial parents who don't cooperate will risk losing their driver's license or other licenses.



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Teen-age recipients will be required to live with their parents or other responsible adults and to finish their high school education. Long-term immigrants will be eligible for benefits that were taken away in the new federal welfare law, and new sponsored immigrants could become eligible after one year if their sponsor's income drops low enough to qualify them. (Refugees and asylees continue to be eligible for benefits for their first five years.)

The new federal law, with which Washington's law now complies, is responsible for breaking the five-year log jam Suzette encountered in the Legislature. Now we have one of the most progressive welfare policies in the nation.

Juvenile Justice System Reform

While Washington state has reduced adult crime rates, the continuing increase in violent juvenile crime is a great threat to the safety of the families and neighborhoods throughout the state. Our flawed juvenile justice system has been too lenient and urgently needed to be toughened up.

The landmark juvenile justice reform bill we passed this session implements two fundamental changes:

- ▶ It gives prosecutors and judges the ability to ensure that every juvenile faces consequences for their actions whenever they break the law, starting with the first offense.
- ▶ It increases punishments for dangerous violent offenders.

Specifically, it requires 16- and 17-year-olds who have been accused of committing certain violent offenses to be tried in adult courts and receive adult sentences. Violent offenses include crimes such as drive-by shooting, first-degree robbery, any crime committed with a firearm, and others.

The seriousness and sentencing guidelines of many crimes is increased. And restitution payments will now be encouraged and ordered regardless of the criminal's ability to pay.

Juveniles' records will not automatically be sealed when they become adults anymore. An adult's criminal

history will include all juvenile prosecutions, regardless of the age of the juvenile at the time of the offense.

We believe these reforms will increase the deterrent effect of our juvenile justice laws and put serious juvenile criminals away for longer, thus increasing our public safety.

Tax Reductions

We believe that government has grown too big and expensive. To reduce its size and expense, we passed a property tax reduction measure with a referendum to get around the governor's veto. Therefore, you, the voters, will have an opportunity to enact your own property tax reductions in November.

Our plan would save the owner of a \$110,000 home \$46 next year and as much as \$23,000 during the life of a 30-year mortgage. Property owners in King County will save \$45 million in the next two years if you approve the referendum.

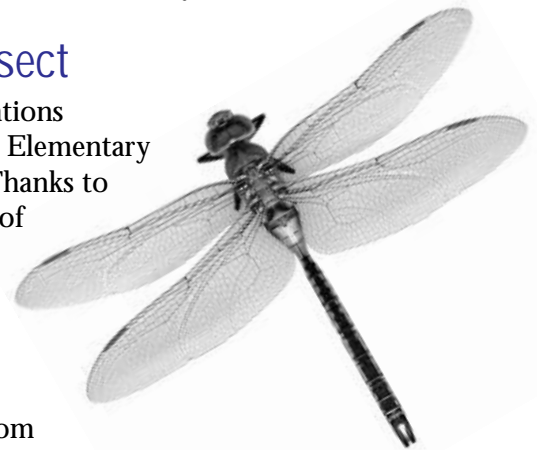
Another tax reduction we passed will roll back 1993 business and occupation tax increases on service companies. The savings to service companies and their customers will be \$99 million next year.

Altogether, the House approved more than 24 tax reduction measures worth \$414 million to Washington taxpayers in the next two years.

State Insect

Congratulations
Crestwood Elementary
students! Thanks to
the efforts of
Crestwood
teacher
Wendy
Shol and
elementary
students from

around the state, Washington now has a
state insect – the dragon fly.





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Seahawks' Stadium

We approved sending a Seattle Seahawks' football and national soccer stadium funding package to a statewide vote in June. The plan contains no new general taxes, a compromise which helped convince us to support the measure. Calls to our offices and people we talked to in district were heavily in favor of sending a responsible plan to a vote, so now the stadium's fate is up to you on June 17. You get the final say.

Gas Tax Increase

Despite the documented need to improve the state's roads and bridges, the Legislature felt voters did not support a gas tax increase to pay for the construction projects. The measure never came to a vote. Instead, the \$3.3 billion transportation budget includes funds for a performance audit of the Department of Transportation and studies of alternative funding mechanisms. The budget, smaller than the previous two biennium transportation budgets, funds no new road/bridge construction projects.

Drug-addicted Babies

To provide a better start to drug-addicted children's lives, Suzette sponsored HB 1864 that would require hospital personnel to detain those babies and administer drug/alcohol withdrawal treatments. She will continue to work on this legislation during the interim along with improving our adoption laws.

Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention

Like adoptive parents, foster parents are a credit to our society because of their dedication to the welfare of children in unfortunate situations. However, we have a shortage of foster parents.

To help, Suzette sponsored HB 2046 which would require the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to contract with a private agency to recruit an

adequate number of prospective adoptive and foster homes. The department will also contract with a private agency for a new foster parent liaison position in each departmental region whose job it will be to reduce foster parent turnover. To aid in that cause, DSHS is authorized to provide child care for foster parents while they are attending mandatory training, meetings and other official functions.

The bill also requires DSHS to reveal a child's full medical and psychological background to potential foster parents before placement. This bill will help alleviate some of the huge burdens on foster parents and, in the process, help and protect children under state care.

It passed the Legislature and was signed by the governor.



Jack testifies in a committee hearing in support of his bill increasing penalties for assaulting a school employee or sports official.

Helping Children Referred to DSHS

Due to the large number of referrals, the Department of Social and Health Services is presently unable to offer services to all families where there is risk of child abuse or neglect. Suzette recognized some of those families have a need for prevention services, so she sponsored a bill passed into law that allows the depart-



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ment to contract in the community for alternative response systems within each DSHS region. The services, offered to families on a volunteer basis, would help provide families skills to prevent escalating levels of child abuse.

During the interim, Suzette is working with the League of Women Voters, child-care providers and the U. of W. Birth-to-Three program to extend parenting assistance and intensive drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs to high-risk parents. The First Steps program currently is available only until a child reaches six weeks of age.

Unregistered Contractors

Jack introduced a bill designed to make it tougher for shady builders to leave their clients holding the bag. House Bill 1903 has been signed into law and will help consumers of construction services by weeding out some unethical builders.

Homeowners or others who unknowingly hire contractors who haven't registered with the state sometimes get stuck paying bills they shouldn't have to pay. That's because unregistered contractors who get into trouble on a job or don't finish it don't have a bond to protect their customers.

The new law increases from \$200-\$3,000 to \$1,000-\$5,000 the penalties on contractors who fail to provide a bond and register with the state. It also gives the state additional enforcement tools they don't have today.

Highway 18

Jack also sponsored a bill that would have created \$60 million in additional Highway 18 construction funding by authorizing refinancing of existing highway construction bonds at lower interest rates. This additional \$60 million could have been used to build new safety enhancements or additional capacity, all from the same bond repayment schedule.

Regrettably, the Senate declined this opportunity for "free money" after the House approved it 97-0.

Affordable Housing

Mitigation fees home builders pay to governments to help pay for schools are one of the reasons new home prices have become so expensive. As a former builder of affordable housing, Jack has been assigned to a special interim committee to search for alternative sources of financing for new schools in growing neighborhoods.

During interim, the committee will hold hearings and talk with local educators to identify existing sources of revenue flow, not new taxes, to fund our growing need for schools.

Keep in touch

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